

VZCZCXRO7621
OO RUEHPA
DE RUEHC #0801/01 1832147
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 012148Z JUL 08
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO RUEHAN/AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO IMMEDIATE 8196
RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION IMMEDIATE 9364
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE 3455
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 9312
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE 9007
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN IMMEDIATE 7367
RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST IMMEDIATE 9372
RUEHCH/AMEMBASSY CHISINAU IMMEDIATE 9249
RUEHCO/AMEMBASSY COTONOU IMMEDIATE 2616
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR IMMEDIATE 9224
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ IMMEDIATE 0571
RUEHLG/AMEMBASSY LILONGWE IMMEDIATE 1199
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE 5978
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 8330
RUEHLE/AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG IMMEDIATE 4895
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA IMMEDIATE 7038
RUEHTO/AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE 2642
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO IMMEDIATE 1266
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 1405
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 9762
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE IMMEDIATE 8433
RUEHPA/AMEMBASSY PRAIA IMMEDIATE 2961
RUEHRK/AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK IMMEDIATE 8718
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE 0744
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 7927
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM IMMEDIATE 5544
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE 2531
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 4988
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA IMMEDIATE 5438
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW IMMEDIATE 1380
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 5586
INFO RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 2701
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 2352
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA IMMEDIATE 5608

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 STATE 070801

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AORC](#) [UN](#) [NGO](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION --
UPCOMING ACTION AT ECOSOC JULY 2008.

REF: USUN 516

¶1. This cable contains an action request. Please see paragraph 3.

¶2. BACKGROUND. In June 2008, the Committee on NGOs (CNGO) of the UN Economic and Social Council rejected the application for ECOSOC consultative status of a U.S. NGO called the Human Rights Foundation (HRF). Cuba -- with support from Sudan, China, Guinea, Egypt, Russia, Burundi, Dominica, and an observer delegation from Venezuela -- alleged that the Chairman of the organization's Board of Directors, Armando Valladares, had been convicted of terrorism. The HRF refuted the terrorism allegation in a letter to the CNGO, saying Valladares had been imprisoned in Cuba for refusing to place a political placard on his desk while working as a bank clerk, for which he was charged with plotting against Cuba's State Security apparatus. HRF also pointed out that Valladares had been adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience, a fact confirmed by Amnesty International annual reports for 1977 and 1983. Amnesty International's 1983 report noted that no conclusive evidence had been presented against Valladares during his trial, and that in the later years of his imprisonment he had been paralyzed. HRF also pointed out to the CNGO that following his release from prison and departure from Cuba, Valladares had come to the United States and been appointed

head of the U.S. delegation to the former UN Commission on Human Rights, with the rank of Ambassador.

At the NGO Committee, the U.S. called for two votes, both of which we lost. On the first vote, the U.S. sought unsuccessfully to have a decision on the application deferred until the Committee could hear from an HRF representative in person. (The Committee rarely takes action during its first examination of an application. The hasty manner in which it took action in this case was all the more surprising because the Committee traditionally defers action on an application whenever a member asks that a representative of the NGO appear in person before it, which in this case could have been easily accomplished because the HRF is located in New York City only a few blocks from UN Headquarters.) Colombia, Israel, Peru, Romania, and the UK voted with the United States in favor of deferring action on the HRF application, saying they needed more time to consider the application, to hear personally from a representative of HRF, and to seek instructions from capitals. India abstained.

On the second vote, the United States was also unsuccessful in countering Cuba's motion to have HRF's application rejected. Colombia, Israel, and Peru voted with the United States to accept the application, with Romania and the UK abstaining solely because they had no instructions from capitals, as the HRF application was so new.

STATE 00070801 002 OF 004

During the current ECOSOC session (June 30 - July 25 in New York), ECOSOC will review the NGO Committee's report. At that time, the U.S. will try to have the NGO Committee's decision overturned and the HRF's application accepted, or at a minimum sent back to the Committee. We will need the support of as many as possible of ECOSOC's 54 member states in order to achieve this.

13. ACTION REQUEST. Action addressees are requested to approach host governments at the appropriate level and draw from the following talking points.

BEGIN TALKING POINTS.

-- At the June session of the UN Economic and Social Council's Committee on NGOs, the application for ECOSOC consultative status of a U.S. non-governmental organization (NGO) called the Human Rights Foundation was hastily rejected.

-- Cuba called for the application's immediate rejection, although the Committee was reviewing it for the first time and rarely takes decisions so quickly. Cuba justified its request by saying that the Chairman of the Human Rights Foundation's Board of Directors, Armando Valladares, is a terrorist.

-- This allegation has no basis in fact. Armando Valladares, who was born in Cuba, was arrested there in 1961 and falsely convicted of plotting against the Cuban State Security apparatus. He spent 22 years in prison, and upon his release in 1983 was allowed to leave the country. Amnesty International, one of the world's most respected human rights organizations, adopted him as a prisoner of conscience during the years of his imprisonment, stating in its annual report for 1983, following his release, that "he confirmed the information gathered by Amnesty International, namely that no conclusive evidence had been presented against him during his trial and that for several years of the later years of his imprisonment, he had been paralyzed."

-- After leaving Cuba, Valladares came to the United States. In 1986 his memoir of the years that he spent as a prisoner of conscience in Cuba was published in the United States. In 1988 he was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the former UN

Commission on Human Rights.

-- At the recent NGO Committee session, the U.S. called for two votes. First we asked that the Committee, which was reviewing the Human Rights Foundation's application for the first time, defer action on it until a representative of the Foundation could address Cuba's allegations in person. The Foundation had already refuted the allegations in writing, but the Committee traditionally gives NGOs an opportunity to appear in person as well, in order to answer any questions the Committee may have. In this case, although the Human Rights Foundation is located in New York City only a few

STATE 00070801 003 OF 004

blocks from UN Headquarters, the Committee rejected the U.S. request for deferral, although five of the Committee's 19 members supported the U.S. request and one member state abstained from voting.

-- Then the United States called for a vote on a motion by Cuba to reject the application. Three Committee members joined the United States in voting against the Cuban motion and two abstained, saying they had no instructions because the application was so new. Nevertheless, the rejection was approved.

-- When ECOSOC meets in New York June 30 through July 25, it will review the NGO Committee's report. At that time, the United States intends to ask ECOSOC to overturn the Committee's decision on the Human Rights Foundation and to grant it consultative status, or at a minimum to send the application back to the NGO Committee for further consideration. We urge you to instruct your delegation in New York to support this decision.

-- The Human Rights Foundation meets all the criteria in the 1996 ECOSOC resolution on the consultative relationship between ECOSOC and NGOs: the Foundation is concerned with matters falling within the competence of ECOSOC; its aims and purposes are in conformity with the UN Charter; and it supports the work of the United Nations. It is duly registered in the United States as a non-profit organization and has a representative structure with an International Council, a Board of Advisors, and a Board of Directors.

-- The Human Rights Foundation is devoted to defending human rights and promoting liberal democracy in the Americas by advocating for fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other UN instruments. It does this through educational programs and research and reporting on human rights violations, with a particular focus on prisoners of conscience. Further information on the Foundation is available on its website, www.humanrightsfoundation.org

-- As the preamble to the 1996 ECOSOC resolution on NGOs points out, ECOSOC needs to take into account the full diversity of the world's NGOs and to acknowledge the breadth of their expertise and capacity to support the UN's work. It is in this spirit that ECOSOC's NGO Committee should have reviewed and accepted the Human Rights Foundation's application.

-- The Committee should base its decisions strictly on merit and the criteria laid out in the 1996 resolution. Unfortunately, in this case the Committee acted hastily and in violation not only of the provisions of the 1996 resolution, but also of its own standard operating procedures.

-- We urge your government to instruct your ECOSOC delegation to join us in supporting ECOSOC consultative status for the Human Rights Foundation at the ongoing ECOSOC session June 30 - July 25 in New York.

STATE 00070801 004 OF 004

-- If you are not prepared to grant consultative status to the Foundation at this time, we urge you to instruct your delegation to support referring its application back to the Committee on NGOs for further review.

END TALKING POINTS.

14. Please report host government reactions to IO/RHS and USUN New York.
RICE